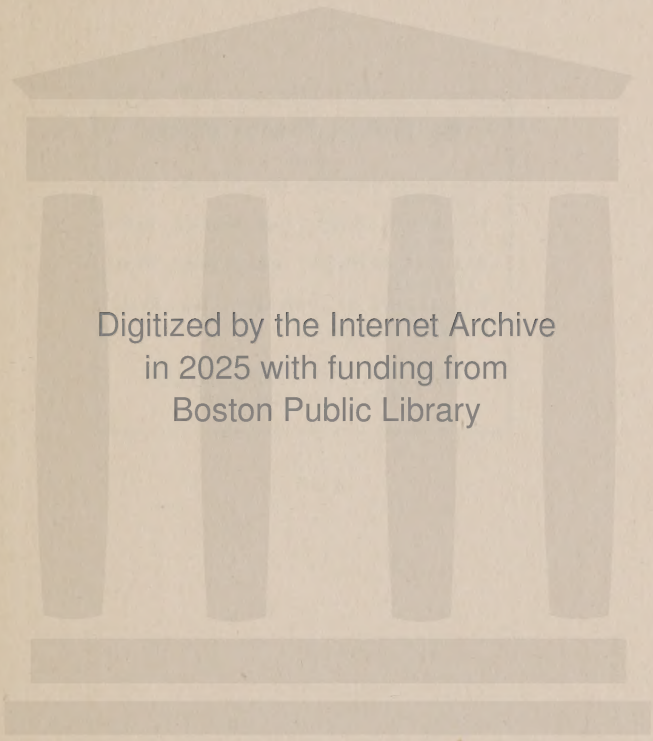
THE FAITH HEALER

WILLIAM VAUGHN MOODY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By William Vaughn Moody

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HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
BOSTON AND NEW YORK

THE FAITH HEALER

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A Play in Four Acts

BY

WILLIAM VAUGHN MOODY

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
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PERSONS OF THE PLAY

ULRICH MICHAELIS
MATTHEW BEELER
MARY BEELER, *his wife*
MARTHA BEELER, *his sister*
ANNIE BEELER, *his daughter*
RHODA WILLIAMS, *Mrs. Beeler's niece*
DR. GEORGE LITTLEFIELD
REV. JOHN CULPEPPER
UNCLE ABE, *an old negro*
LAZARUS, *an Indian boy*
A YOUNG MOTHER, *with her child*
Various sick persons, and others accompanying them

ACT I

ACT I

A large old-fashioned room in Matthew Beeler's farmhouse, near a small town in the Middle West. The room is used both for dining and for general living purposes. It suggests, in architecture and furnishings, a past of considerable prosperity, which has now given place to more humble living. The house is, in fact, the ancestral home of Mr. Beeler's wife, Mary, born Beardsley, a family of the local farming aristocracy, now decayed. At the rear is a large window and window-seat, set in a broad alcove. This alcove is flanked on the left by a double door set cross-wise in the corner, leading to a hall. Off this hall open two bedrooms (not seen), one belonging to Mr. and Mrs. Beeler, the other to Rhoda Williams, a niece of Mrs. Beeler, child of her dead sister. To the right of the window is a small entrance hall, the door of which when opened shows the side yard, with trees and farm buildings. In the right wall of the room a door and covered stairway lead to the upper story. Further forward is a wall-cupboard, and a door leading into the kitchen. Opposite this cupboard, in the left-hand wall of the room, is a mantelpiece and grate.*

* NOTE. — Right and left are from the spectator's standpoint.

The room contains, among other articles of furniture, a dining-table (with detachable leaves to reduce its bulk when not in use for eating purposes), an old-fashioned wall clock, a low sofa of generous size, and a book-shelf, upon which are arranged the scientific books which Mr. Beeler takes a somewhat untutored but genuine delight in. Tacked upon the wall near by are portraits of scientific men, Darwin and Spencer conspicuous among them, cut from periodicals. Other pictures, including family daguerreotypes and photographs, are variously distributed about the walls. Over the mantel-shelf hangs a large map of the United States and Mexico, faded and fly-specked.

As the curtain rises, the room is dark, except for a dull fire in the grate. The ticking of the clock is heard; it strikes six. Martha Beeler, a woman of forty-five, enters from the kitchen, carrying a lighted lamp. She wears a shawl over her shoulders, a print dress, and a kitchen apron. She places the lamp on the table, which is set for breakfast, and puts coal in the grate, which soon flames more brightly. She goes into the hall and is heard knocking and calling.

MARTHA.

Rhody! Rhody!

She is heard to open and shut Rhoda's bedroom door. Another door in the hall is heard to open. Matthew Beeler, a man of fifty, enters. He is not quite dressed, but finishes as he comes in. Martha follows him.

Where's that niece of yours got to now?

BEELER.

She's helpin' Mary dress.

MARTHA.

What in time's Mary gettin' up for? She's only in the way till the work's done.

BEELER.

She's restless.

MARTHA.

Significantly.

I should n't wonder.

BEELER.

At the window, rolls up the curtain.

We're going to have just such another day as yesterday. Never seen such a fog.

He jerks the curtain down again.

MARTHA.

Refusing to be put off.

I hope you know *why* Mary did n't sleep.

BEELER.

Evasively.

She 's always been a light sleeper, since she got her stroke.

MARTHA.

Look here, Mat Beeler! I'm your born sister. Don't try to fool me! You know why your wife did n't sleep last night.

BEELER.

Maybe I do, Sis.

Points at the ceiling.

Is he up yet?

MARTHA.

Up! I don't believe he 's been abed.

They listen, as to the tread of some one on the floor above.

Back and forth, like a tiger in a cage!

BEELER.

Shrugs.

Queer customer.

MARTHA.

Yes —

Imitates him.

"Queer customer," that 's you. But come to doin' anything about it!

BEELER.

As Martha goes out by the kitchen door.

Give me time, Sis, give me time!

He lights a lantern meditatively, and holds it up before the print portraits.

Mornin', Mr. Darwin. Same to you, Mr. Spencer. Still keepin' things straight?

The hall-door again opens, and Rhoda Williams, a girl of twenty, enters with Annie Beeler, a child of ten.

ANNIE.

Tugs at Rhoda's dress.

Cousin Rho! You have n't buttoned my dress.

Rhoda sits down, with the child before her, and begins to button the long slip.

BEELER.

At the outer door.

How does your aunt strike you this morning?

RHODA.

Earnestly.

She seems wonderfully better.

BEELER.

Better!

RHODA.

I don't mean her poor body. She 's got past caring for that.

BEELER.

With sarcasm.

You mean better in her mind, eh?

RHODA.

Yes, I mean better in her mind.

BEELER.

Because of what this fellow has been saying to her, I suppose.

RHODA.

Yes, because of that.

BEELER.

Grunts as he turns down his lantern, which is smoking.

An out-and-out fakir!

RHODA.

You don't know him.

BEELER.

I suppose you do, after twenty-four hours. What in the name of nonsense is he, anyway? And this deaf and dumb Indian boy he drags around with him. What's his part in the show?

RHODA.

I know very little about either of them, but I know Mr. Michaelis is not — what you say.

BEELER.

Well, he's a crank at the best of it. He's worked your aunt up now so's she can't sleep. — You brought him here, and you 've got to get rid of him.

Exit by outer door, with inarticulate grumblings, among which can be distinguished, "Humph! Ulrich Michaelis! There's a name for you!"

ANNIE.

What's a fakir?

Rhoda does not answer. Steps are heard descending the stairs. The child fidgets nervously.

Hurry up! He's coming down.

RHODA.

Nonsense, Annie. Hold still.

ANNIE.

In a panic.

Let me go!

She breaks away and retreats to the hall door, watching the stair door open, and Ulrich Michaelis enter. Thereupon, with a glance of frightened curiosity, she flees. Michaelis is a man of twenty-eight or thirty, with emaciated face, and abundant hair worn longer than common. His frame, though slight, is powerful, and his way of handling himself has the freedom and largeness which come from much open air life. There is nevertheless something curiously vague and indecisive in his movements. He has a trick of handling things, putting them down only to take them up again immediately, before renouncing them for good. His face shows the effect of sleeplessness, and his gray flannel shirt and dark coarse clothing are rumpled and neglected.

RHODA.

As he enters.

Good-morning, Mr. Michaelis.

MICHAELIS.

Good-morning.

Rhoda adds the finishing touches to the breakfast-table. Michaelis stops beside her in his nervous walk and asks hesitatingly:

Why does that child — ?

He breaks off embarrassed.

RHODA.

O, Annie 's a queer little body. She has her mother's nerves. And then she sees no one, living here on the back road. If this dreadful fog ever lifts, you 'll see that though we 're quite near town, it 's almost as if we were in the wilderness.

The stair door again opens, and an Indian boy, about sixteen years old, enters. He is dressed in ordinary clothes, and except for his dark skin, longish hair, and the noiseless tread of his moccasined feet, gives no sign of his race. He bows to Rhoda, who returns his salutation; then, with a glance at Michaelis, he goes outdoors.

RHODA.

Nods toward the closing door.

It 's really him Annie 's afraid of. He 's like a creature from another world to her.

MICHAELIS.

Looks at her in an odd, startled way.

Another world?

RHODA.

O, you 're used to his people. Your father was a missionary to the Indians, you told me.

MICHAELIS.

Yes.

RHODA.

Where?

MICHAELIS.

At Acoma.

RHODA.

Where is that?

MICHAELIS.

Standing near the wall map, touches it.

In New Mexico, by the map.

RHODA.

Comes nearer.

What is it like?

MICHAELIS.

It 's — as you say — another world.

RHODA.

Describe it to me.

MICHAELIS.

Gazing at the map.

I could n't make you see it. It 's — centuries and centuries from our time.

RHODA.

Tell me a little, at least. What was it like, that place where you lived?

MICHAELIS.

Becomes absorbed in his own mental picture as he speaks.

A gigantic table of stone, rising five hundred feet sheer out of the endless waste of sand. A little adobe house, halfway up the mesa, with the desert far below, and the Indian pueblo far above. A tiny garden, with three peach trees, and a spring which the Indians worshiped in secret. A little chapel, which my father had built with his own hands. He often spent the night there, praying. And there — one morning — I found him lying dead before the altar.

RHODA.

After a moment's hush.

And you — what did you do then?

MICHAELIS.

I went away, south, into the mountains, and got work on a sheep range. I was a shepherd for five years.

RHODA.

And since then?

MICHAELIS.

Hesitates.

Since then I have — wandered about, working here and there to earn enough to live on.

RHODA.

I understand well why men take up that life. I should love it myself.

MICHAELIS.

I did n't do it because I loved it.

RHODA.

Why, then?

Michaelis remains silent. She looks at him, puzzled. A bell tinkles, left.

MICHAELIS.

As if relieved.

Was n't that your aunt's bell?

Rhoda goes out by the hall door. Michaelis remains looking at the map. Martha enters from the kitchen, carrying a steaming coffee-pot and a platter of smoking meat, which she places on the table. Michaelis, turning, bows to her.

MARTHA.

Snappishly.

Hope you *slept* well!

She goes to the outer door, rings the breakfast bell loudly, and exit to kitchen. Rhoda enters, wheeling Mrs. Beeler in an invalid-chair. Mrs. Beeler is a woman of forty, slight of body, with hair just beginning to silver. Her face has the curious refinement which physical suffering sometimes brings, and is lit up by the inward radiance, like a lamp kindled behind the veil of flesh, which often marks the mystic and the devotee. Annie lingers at the door, looking timidly at Michaelis as he approaches Mrs. Beeler and takes her hand from the arm of the chair.

MICHAELIS.

You are better?

MRS. BEELER.

Speaks with low intensity.

Much, much better.

He puts her hand gently back on the chair arm. Martha enters with other dishes. She pours out coffee, putting a cup at each place. Mr. Beeler has entered from the kitchen, and the boy from outside. Beeler, with a glance of annoyance at his wife and Michaelis, sits down at the head of the table. Rhoda pushes Mrs. Beeler's chair to the foot of the table, and stands feeding her, eating her own breakfast meanwhile. Michaelis sits at Mrs. Beeler's left, and the boy at Mr. Beeler's right, Martha opposite. Martha beckons to Annie to come to the table, but the child, eyeing the strangers, refuses, taking a chair behind her mother by the mantelpiece.

MRS. BEELER.

After a moment's silence.

Mat, you have n't said good-morning to our guest.

BEELER.

Gruffly.

How are you?

He helps himself to the meat and passes it to the others: the plate goes round the table. There is a constrained silence. Annie tugs at Rhoda's skirt, and asks in dumb show to have her breakfast given her. Rhoda

fills the child's plate, with which she retreats to her chair by the mantel.

MRS. BEELER.

Why does n't Annie come to the table?

She tries to look round.

RHODA.

Whispers to Mrs. Beeler, who subsides, after a puzzled look. Another silence, during which Rhoda urges Mrs. Beeler to eat.

Do eat something, Auntie.

MRS. BEELER.

I'll drink a little more tea.

Rhoda raises the cup to Mrs. Beeler's lips.

BEELER.

You can't live on tea, Mary.

MARTHA.

I guess she can live on tea better than on some things.

With a resentful glance at Michaelis, who, after pretending to eat, sits gazing at his plate abstractedly.

Some things that some folks seem to live on, and expect other folks to live on.

Michaelis looks up, and begins to busy himself with his breakfast, embarrassed. Beeler nods at Martha in covert approval, as she takes up dishes and goes into the kitchen.

MRS. BEELER.

Leans forward across the table to Michaelis.

Don't mind my sister-in-law, Mr. Michaelis. It's her way. She means nothing by it.

BEELER.

Hotly.

Don't know as you've got any call to speak for Martha. She generally means what she says, and I guess she means it *now*. And what's more, I guess I do too!

MRS. BEELER.

Beseechingly.

Mat!

BEELER.

Throws down his napkin and rises.

Very well. It's none of my business, I reckon, as long as it keeps within reason.

He goes out through the kitchen. Mrs. Beeler leans over her plate; the others bow their heads.

MRS. BEELER.

Bless this food to our use, and this day to our strength and our salvation.

RHODA.

As they lift their heads.

Perhaps it will be light enough now without the lamp.

Michaelis rolls up the shades, while Rhoda extinguishes the lamp. The fog is still thick, and the light which enters is dull. Rhoda unpins the napkin from her aunt's breast, and wheels her back from the table. The boy crouches down by the grate, Indian fashion.

MRS. BEELER.

Gazing out, from where she sits reclining.

The blessed sun. I never thought to see it rise again so beautiful.

RHODA.

Looks at her aunt, puzzled and alarmed.

But, Auntie, there is n't any —

She breaks off, seeing Michaelis place his finger on his lip as a signal for her to be silent. Mrs. Beeler continues after a moment.

MRS. BEELER.

Dreamily.

Another day. — And to-morrow the best of all days of the year.

ANNIE.

From her seat behind, where, since finishing her breakfast, she has sat staring, fascinated, at the strangers.

What day is to-morrow?

MRS. BEELER.

Come here, Annie.

The child approaches timidly.

ANNIE.

At her mother's side.

What day is to-morrow?

MRS. BEELER.

With exaltation in her voice.

To-morrow is Easter.

ANNIE.

Can I have some eggs to color?

MRS. BEELER.

Ask Aunt Martha.

ANNIE.

Sing-song, as she skips out.

Eggs to color! Eggs to color!

Rhoda has meanwhile fetched a large tray from the stair cupboard, and has been piling the dishes noiselessly upon it.

RHODA.

Shall I wheel you in, Aunt Mary?

MRS. BEELER.

Yes, please.

Rhoda wheels the chair toward the hall door, which Michaelis opens. Mrs. Beeler gazes at him as she passes.

Will you come in soon, and sit with me? There is so much that I want to hear.

MICHAELIS.

Whenever you are ready.

MRS. BEELER.

I will ring my bell.

As they go out, Martha bustles in, gathers up the dish-tray and is about to depart, with a vindictive look. At the door she turns, and jerks her head toward the boy.

MARTHA.

Is it against the law to work, where he comes from?

MICHAELIS.

Abstractedly.

What? — No.

MARTHA.

Then he might as well do me some chores. Not but right, payin' only half board.

MICHAELIS.

To the boy.

Do whatever she tells you.

The boy follows Martha out. Michaelis takes a Testament from his pocket and turns the leaves. As Rhoda reënters, he looks up, keeping a finger in the book. He speaks significantly, with suppressed excitement.

She saw the sun!

RHODA.

Poor dear Auntie!

MICHAELIS.

You pity her?

RHODA.

After an instant's silence, during which she ponders her reply.

I think I envy her.

She removes the cloth from the table, and begins deftly to put the room in order. Michaelis watches her with a kind of vague intentness.

MICHAELIS.

How long did you say she had been sick?

RHODA.

More than four years. — Nearly five.

MICHAELIS.

She has never walked in that time?

RHODA.

Shakes her head.

Nor used her right hand, either.

MICHAELIS.

With intensity.

Are you certain?

RHODA.

Surprised at his tone.

Yes — I have n't lived here long, but I am certain.

MICHAELIS.

She has tried medicine, doctors?

RHODA.

Uncle has spent everything he could earn on them. She has been three times to the mineral baths, once as far as Virginia.

MICHAELIS.

Looks at the open Testament in his hand.

But never as far as Bethesda.

RHODA.

Bethesda? Where is that?

MICHAELIS.

Reads in a low voice.

"Now there was at Jerusalem a pool, which is called Bethesda, having five porches. . . . And an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the waters. Whosoever then first after the troubling of the waters stepped in, he was made whole of whatsoever disease he had."

He closes the book.

RHODA.

If anybody could find the way there again, it would be Aunt Mary.

Pause.

— And if anybody could show her the way, it would be — you.

She goes on in a different tone, as if to escape from the embarrassment of her last speech.

— Her saying just now she saw the sun. She often says things like that. Have you noticed?

MICHAELIS.

Yes.

RHODA.

With hesitation.

Her brother Seth, the one who died. — Has she told you about him?

MICHAELIS.

Yes.

RHODA.

What she thinks happens — since — he died?

Michaelis nods assent.

And yet in all other ways her mind is perfectly clear.

MICHAELIS.

Perhaps in this way it is clearer still.

RHODA.

Startled.

You mean that maybe she really does see her brother?

MICHAELIS.

That is what I mean.

RHODA.

It would make the world a very different—a very strange place, if that *were* true.

MICHAELIS.

The world *is* a very strange place.

He has paused before the wall map and is gazing at it. Rhoda, after a silence during which she gathers courage, speaks impulsively.

RHODA.

Why do you keep looking at that map?

MICHAELIS.

Does not answer at first, and then speaks with eyes still on the map.

I must go away.

RHODA.

Impulsively.

O, not yet!

MICHAELIS.

My time is short. I have stopped too long already.

RHODA.

In a low tone.

Your time — for what?

MICHAELIS.

To fulfill my life.

RHODA.

As before.

Are n't you doing that here?

MICHAELIS.

Turns to her, his expression changing to a dark, ambiguous intentness.

No.

Another pause.

Not my real life.

RHODA.

Your — real life?

He turns away and walks nervously about the room, without answering. Rhoda continues, after a long pause.

There in the mountains, when you were a shepherd — was that your real life?

MICHAELIS.

It was the beginning of it.

RHODA.

With hesitation.

Won't you tell me a little about that time?

MICHAELIS.

Begins as before, hesitatingly, but again gathers interest swiftly as he talks.

I was alone, with the world spread out, beautiful, ghostly, far beneath. In the fall I would drive the sheep south, through the great basin which sloped down into Mexico, and in the spring back again to the mountains.

RHODA.

You say you were all alone?

MICHAELIS.

There were a few men on the ranges, but they were no more to me than the sheep — not so much.

RHODA:

Were n't you dreadfully lonely?

MICHAELIS.

No.

RHODA.

You had n't even any books to read?

MICHAELIS.

I had this pocket Bible, that had been my father's. I read that sometimes. But always in a dream, without understanding, without remembering. — Yet there came a time when whole chapters started up in my mind, as plain as if the printed page were before me, and I understood it all, both the outer meaning and the inner.

RHODA.

And you did n't know what made the difference?

MICHAELIS.

Yes.

RHODA.

What was it?

MICHAELIS.

I can't tell you that.

RHODA.

O, yes!

MICHAELIS.

There are no words to tell of it.

RHODA.

Yet tell me. I need to know. Believe me, I need to know!

MICHAELIS.

Slowly, groping for his words.

It was one morning in the fourth spring. We were back in the mountains again. It was lambing time, and I had been up all night. Just before sunrise, I sat down on a rock to rest. Then — it came.

RHODA.

What came?

He does not answer.

You saw something?

He nods for yes.

What was it?

MICHAELIS.

Rises, lifting his arms, a prey to uncontrollable excitement.

The living Christ! — Standing before me on the mountain, amid the grazing sheep. — With these eyes and in this flesh, I saw Him.

Silence. Mrs. Beeler's bell rings. At the sound his tension loosens; he starts toward the hall door, as if relieved.

RHODA.

Following him to the door.

You had fallen asleep. It was a dream.

MICHAELIS.

Shakes his head in negation.

That was n't all.

The bell rings again. He opens the door.

RHODA.

Will you tell me the rest, some time?

MICHAELIS.

Hesitates.

Perhaps.

Exit. She looks after him until the door of Mrs. Beeler's room is heard to shut, then closes the hall door and stands in thought.

CURTAIN

ACT II

ACT II

Two hours later. Rhoda sits before the grate, in dreamy meditation. Beeler, who has just come in from the barn, wears an old fur cap and holds in his hands some battered harness, an awl, twine, and wax, which he deposits on the window-seat. After removing his cap and filling his pipe, he picks up from a heap of papers on the table a large colored newspaper supplement, which he unfolds and looks at with relish.

BEELER.

These Sunday papers do get up fine supplements. I would n't take money for that picture.

He holds it up.

RHODA.

Looks at it absently.

What does it mean?

BEELER.

Reads.

"Pan and the Pilgrim." Guess you never heard of Pan, did you?

RHODA.

Yes. One of the old heathen gods.

BEELER.

Call him heathen if you like! The folks that worshiped him thought he was orthodox, I guess.

He pins up the print, which represents a palmer of crusading times, surprised in the midst of a forest by the god Pan.

BEELER.

As he takes off his coat, and sits down to mend the harness.

Rhody, ain't this religious business rather a new thing with you? Up there in St. Louis, did n't go in for it much up there, did you?

RHODA.

Looks at him quickly.

Why do you ask that?

BEELER.

O, I gathered, from things I heard, that you cared more about dancin' than about prayin', up there.

She turns away. He continues after a meditative pause.

When I first saw you on your father's farm out in Kansas, you was as wild a little gypsy as I ever set eyes on. I said then to your dad, "There 's a filly that 'll need a good breakin'." I never thought I 'd see you takin' up with these gospel-peddlers.

He continues after working a moment in silence.

Michaelis. — Foreigner, ain't he? Sounds Russian-like.

RHODA.

I believe his father's people came from some place over there.

Martha comes in from hall and fusses about, dusting, etc. She points in the direction of Mrs. Beeler's room.

MARTHA.

They 're prayer-meetin' it again. And Mary lyin' there as if she saw the pearly gates openin' before her eyes.

BEELER.

Half to himself, as he works.

Poor Mary! — Mary 's a strange woman.

MARTHA.

To Rhoda.

Your mother was the same way, Rhody. The whole Beardsley tribe, for that matter. But Mary was the worst. It begun with Mary as soon as her brother Seth got drowned.

BEELER.

Looks up, angry.

None of that, Sis!

MARTHA.

I guess my tongue 's my own.

BEELER.

No, it ain't. I won't have any more of that talk around me, do you hear? I put my foot down a year ago.

MARTHA.

Points at his foot derisively.

It 's big enough and ugly enough, Heaven knows, but you can put it down as hard as you like, it won't keep a man's sperrit in his grave — not when he 's a mind to come out!

BEELER.

Astonished.

Martha Beeler!

MARTHA.

That 's my name.

She flounces out into the kitchen, covering her retreat with her last speech.

BEELER.

Looking after her.

My kingdom! Martha! I thought *she* had some horse sense left.

RHODA.

Slowly, as she rises from her seat before the fire.

Uncle, it's hard to live side by side with Aunt Mary and not —

She breaks off.

BEELER.

In angry challenge.

And not what?

RHODA.

And not believe there's something more in these matters than "horse sense" will account for.

BEELER.

Hotly, as if a sore point had been touched upon.

There's nothing more than science will account for.

He points to the shelf of books.

You can read it up any day you like. Read that book yonder, chapter called Hallucinations. Pathological, that's what it is, pathological!

RHODA.

What does that mean?

Beeler taps his forehead significantly.

RHODA.

Shocked.

Uncle, you know that's not true!

BEELER.

Growls to himself.

Pathological, up and down..

Martha opens the kitchen door and calls in.

MARTHA.

Here 's Uncle Abe!

BEELER.

Uncle Abe? Thought he was a goner.

Uncle Abe enters. He is an old negro, with gray hair and thin gray beard. He is somewhat bowed, and carries a stick, but is not decrepit. His clothes are spattered with mud. Martha enters with him; she is stirring something in a bowl, and during the following continues to do so, though more and more interruptedly and absent-mindedly.

BEELER.

Hello, Uncle Abe.

UNCLE ABE.

Good-mawnin', Mista' Beeler.

BEELER.

Where 've you been all winter? Thought you 'd gone up Salt River.

UNCLE ABE.

Shakes his head reassuringly.

Ain' nevah goin' up no Salt River, yo' Uncle Abe ain't.

BEELER.

Indicating Rhoda.

Make you acquainted with my wife's niece, Miss Williams.

Uncle Abe bows.

RHODA.

Pushing forward a chair.

Sit down, Uncle. I don't see how you found your way in this dreadful fog.

UNCLE ABE.

Fawg don' matta' nothin' to me, honey. Don' mean nothin' 't all.

He speaks with exaltation and restrained excitement.

Yo' ol' Uncle keeps on tellin' 'em, dis hyah fawg an' darkness don' mean nothin' 't all!

Rhoda and Martha look at him, puzzled.

BEELER.

Has not been struck by the old negro's words.

How's the ginseng crop this year?

UNCLE ABE.

Solemnly.

They ain' no' mo' gimsing!

BEELER.

No more ginseng? What do you mean?

UNCLE ABE.

De good Lawd, he ain' goin' fool roun' no' mo' wif no gimsing!

BEELER.

Amused.

Why, I thought your ginseng bitters was His main holt.

UNCLE ABE.

With a touch of regret.

Use to be, Mars' Beeler. It shore use to be. — Yes, sah. Bless de Lawd —

Shakes his head in reminiscence.

He sartinly did set sto' by them thah bitters.

BEELER.

With lazy amusement.

So the Lord 's gone back on ginseng now, has He?

UNCLE ABE.

Yes, sah.

BEELER.

What makes you think so?

UNCLE ABE.

Solemnly.

Roots all kill by de fros'!

His manner grows more and more mysterious; he half closes his eyes, as he goes on in a strange, mounting sing-song.

Knowed it more 'n a monf ago, fo' dis hyah blin' worl' lef' de plow in de plow-share an' de ungroun' wheat betwixen de mill-stones, and went a-follerin' aftah dis new star outen de Eas', like a bride follerin' aftah de bridegroom!

Rhoda looks at the others. Martha taps her forehead significantly, and goes back to her batter.

BEELER.

New star, Uncle? Tell us about it. Sounds interesting.

UNCLE ABE.

Stares at each of them in turn.

Ain' you-all heerd?

BEELER.

You 've got the advantage of us.

UNCLE ABE.

Ain' you-all heerd 'bout de Healer?

BEELER.

Healer? What kind of a healer?

UNCLE ABE.

With mounting indignation at Mr. Beeler's tone.

De Bible kin', that's what kin'! De kin' what makes de lame fer to walk, an' de blin' fer to see, an' de daid fer to riz up outen their daid col' graves. That's what kin'! Mean to say you-all ain' heerd nothin' 'bout him, you po' chillun o' dawkness?

All look at each other in amazement.

BEELER.

Nope.

Recollecting.

Hold on!

RHODA.

Deeply agitated, to Beeler.

Don't you remember, in the papers, two or three weeks ago? Where was it? — Somewhere out West.

BEELER.

Believe I did read some such goin's-on. Don't pay much attention to such nonsense.

UNCLE ABE.

Solemn and threatening.

Tek keer, Mista' Beeler! Tek keer what you say 'fore dese here cloudy witnesses. Don' you go cuttin' yo'self off from de Kingdom. Nor you, Mis' Martha, nor you, honey. Don' ye do it! It 's a-comin'. Yo' ol' Uncle Abe he 's seen and heerd.

RHODA.

Tell us quickly what you mean.

UNCLE ABE.

Mean jes' what I says, honey. Night fo' last, de Healer, he come, like 's if he jes' plum' drop from de sky.

More mysteriously.

An' whar 's he gone to? You listen to yo' ol' Uncle Abe a-tellin' you. He ain' gone nowhars! He 's jes' meechin' roun' in de fawg, a-waitin' fer de Lawd to call folks. En He 's a-callin' 'em! He 's a-callin' 'em by tens an' by hunderds. Town 's full a'ready, honey. Main Street look jes' lak a fiel' hospital, down Souf, durin' de wah!

Beeler, Rhoda, and Martha look at one another in astonished silence.

MARTHA.

Meeting Beeler's look.

What did I tell you? Maybe you 'll listen to *me,* next time.

RHODA.

To Uncle Abe, in a low, frightened voice.

This man you call the Healer — is he alone?

UNCLE ABE.

No, honey. Folks says he don' nevah go nowheres by hisse'f. Always got thah young man wif 'im what he raise from de daid.

Silence.

BEELER.

With a shrug.

Good-evening!

He turns to the portraits of Darwin and Spencer.

You made quite a stir in your time, did n't you? Well, it 's all up with you!

RHODA.

In a low voice, to the negro.

Raised from the dead?

UNCLE ABE.

That 's what they says, honey. Calls hisse'f Laz'rus, in ref'ence to de Bible chil' what riz up jes' same way lak', outen de daid col' tomb.

The Indian boy enters from the kitchen, his shoes and trousers spattered with mud. Uncle Abe looks at him, then at the others, and whispers to Rhoda. At her

affirmative nod, he rises and lifts his arms ecstatically. Rhoda restrains him from speaking, and stands between him and the boy. Martha bustles forward, hiding her agitation in scolding speech.

MARTHA.

Well, did you get my coffee and my sal-soda?

Lazarus points, without speaking, to the kitchen.

BEELER.

To Martha.

Did you send him to the store?

MARTHA.

Yes, I did send him to the store. If I had my way, I 'd send him — further!

Lazarus hesitates, then goes stolidly out by the stair door. Uncle Abe says something in an awestruck whisper to Rhoda. She nods, raising her hand restrainingly.

UNCLE ABE.

O Lawd, bless dis hyar house o' grace!

BEELER.

Rising.

I guess it's about time he came out and exploded some of this tomfoolery.

RHODA.

Stopping him.

Please don't!

BEELER.

Peevishly.

There 's got to be an end to this hoodoo-business in my house.

Annie enters from the kitchen, dabbled with dye. She holds two colored eggs in her hands.

ANNIE.

Look! I've colored two.

MARTHA.

Good gracious, child. What a mess!

ANNIE.

Runs to her father.

Pa! Play crack with me! Just once, to see how it goes.

BEELER.

Go in and ask your mother if she 'll let you.

Annie, her eggs in her apron, opens the hall door. About to pass out, she stops, and drops the eggs with a scream.

ANNIE.

Pa! Auntie! Ma 's walking!

Mrs. Beeler enters, walking uncertainly, her face full of intense exaltation. Michaelis comes just behind her, transfigured by spiritual excitement.

BEELER *and* MARTHA.

Starting forward.

Mary!

RHODA.

Aunt Mary!

Mrs. Beeler advances into the room, reaching out her hand to Annie, who takes it in speechless fright. She bends over and kisses the child's head, then stretches out her other hand to her husband.

MRS. BEELER.

Mat, I'm cured! The Lord has heard our prayers, for his saint's sake.

BEELER.

Why, Mary, I can't believe this. It's too — it's not possible!

He kisses her.

MRS. BEELER.

Looking at Michaelis.

It is written that he who has faith even as a grain of mustard seed —. I have had faith.

MARTHA.

Law, you've had faith enough any time these five years, Mary. There was something else wanting, 'pears to me.

MRS. BEELER.

There was wanting the word of the Lord, saying, "Suffer no more! Stoop and drink of the waters of mercy and healing."

MARTHA.

Sotto voce.

Well, you could knock me down with a feather!

MRS. BEELER.

Moves her hand vaguely.

I'll go back now, Mat. I'm a little weak and dizzy yet.

Beeler and the others, except Michaelis, move toward the door. On the threshold, Mrs. Beeler turns and looks at Michaelis, who stands with excited face and radiant eyes beside the table. She then looks at her husband, smiling.

BEELER.

Kissing her forehead.

Forgive me, Mary. I guess I 've been a fool.

MRS. BEELER.

In the door, to Rhoda, indicating Michaelis.

Tell him. Thank him. I can't.

The rest go out, leaving Rhoda and Michaelis alone. She stands silent, unable to voice her emotion.

MICHAELIS.

With uncontrollable excitement, points.

You saw her walk in that door, and out again!

RHODA.

I did, I did!

MICHAELIS.

The Lord is with me. He has not withdrawn His face from me.

RHODA.

How can you even think such a thing, when He has just poured out His power upon you?

MICHAELIS.

With nervous exaltation.

Has He not? Has He not?

RHODA.

O, so wonderfully! Not to be spoken about, only believed in silence. —

Pause. She goes on with excited hesitation.

And now, after what we 've seen this morning, and what we 've heard!

MICHAELIS.

Startled.

Heard? — What have you heard?

RHODA.

Such strange and wonderful things. — Such beautiful and terrible things.

MICHAELIS.

What have you heard? —

She does not answer; he comes nearer.

Has that boy been talking?

RHODA.

In a low voice.

Tell me I may believe it! — Is it true?

He turns away. She follows him, and speaks after a long silence.

Tell me all, from the beginning.

Another pause.

What happened to you, after — after that morning in the mountains?

MICHAELIS.

Begins to talk slowly and reluctantly, but soon, as if hypnotized by the memories evoked, his manner becomes eager, confident, and impassioned.

I lived straight ahead, with the sheep, for two years.

RHODA.

Hesitating.

Did you ever *see* anything again?

MICHAELIS.

No. — But twice — I heard a voice.

RHODA.

What kind of a voice?

MICHAELIS.

The first time it came at night. I was walking on the top of the mountain, in a stony place. It — it was like a wind among the stones.

RHODA.

What did it say?

MICHAELIS.

It said, "Prepare! Prepare!"

RHODA.

And the second time?

MICHAELIS.

In the same place, at dawn. The voice said, "Go forth, it is finished!" I looked round me and saw

nothing. Then it came again, like a wind among the stones, "Go forth, it is begun!"

RHODA.

And you obeyed?

MICHAELIS.

I plucked a dry seed-pod from among the stones, and threw the seeds into the air. They drifted north. Then I found a man to take my place, and started north, in the direction the seeds had drifted. Three days after, I climbed the mesa toward my old home. Above, in the pueblo, I heard the sound of tom-toms and wailing squaws. They told me that the young son of the chief lay dead in my father's chapel. I sat beside him all day and all night. Just before daylight —

He breaks off abruptly.

RHODA.

Go on.

MICHAELIS.

Just before daylight, when the other watchers were asleep, the power of the spirit came strong upon me. I bowed myself upon the boy's body, and

prayed. My heart burned within me, for I felt his heart begin to beat! His eyes opened. I told him to arise, and he arose. He that was dead arose and was alive again!

Pause.

That was five years ago. He has been with me ever since.

Long pause.

RHODA.

We have all been searching, and you alone have found. — When I think what I was a week ago, and what the world seemed like, and how your words — the very sight of your face — changed everything in life and death for me —

She breaks off, frightened by the passion of his face, as he leans toward her.

MICHAELIS.

Huskily.

The sight — of my face?

RHODA.

Shrinking, but in a steady voice.

Many people, men and women, must have told you the same.

MICHAELIS.

With passionate abandon.

Why do you bring in the others? Why do you hide yourself in a crowd of others? It 's of me and you we are talking!

Martha opens the hall door and calls.

MARTHA.

Rhody! Rhody!

RHODA.

Going toward her.

Yes?

MARTHA.

Come here, quick. Your aunt wants you.

Rhoda goes out, Martha holding the door open. Michaelis follows to the door, and as Martha starts out, catches hold of her sleeve.

MICHAELIS.

Mrs. Beeler 's not — worse?

MARTHA.

Sourly.

Not yet.

She shuts the door abruptly upon him. Outside at a distance, the shrill soprano of a negro woman is faintly heard, taking up a hymn. At the sound of the music Michaelis turns slowly toward the window. He stands rigid, listening to the hymn to the end of the verse, when other voices, still faint, join in the chorus. He goes to the window and looks, with a sort of painful deliberation, up and down the road. The fog has partially cleared. The stair door opens. Lazarus enters and comes softly to Michaelis's side.

MICHAELIS.

Turning.

Who are they?

LAZARUS.

Sick people.

MICHAELIS.

How did they find out?

LAZARUS.

With a vague, wide gesture of the hands.

From the earth, from the air.

Michaelis looks out again. There is a moment's silence. The chorus of the hymn is taken up, nearer, but still muffled by distance.

LAZARUS.

Touching his master's shoulder.

Come! We go away.

MICHAELIS.

Looking at the boy vacantly.

Where?

LAZARUS.

Back to the desert. Good Spirit don't like white man. We go back. This is bad place. Come!

He tries with gentle force to move Michaelis, but desists as the hall door opens. Mrs. Beeler enters, supported by her husband and Rhoda. Martha comes just behind, with Annie clinging fearfully to her skirts. Mrs. Beeler, with an upward gesture of her arms, frees herself of her supporters, and advances alone toward Michaelis. A hymn bursts out, nearer and louder than before, then grows quickly fainter and more distant.

MRS. BEELER.

To Michaelis.

I have heard, I have seen. Your great hour is at hand.

Michaelis makes an ambiguous gesture, as of denial. She comes a step or two nearer.

MRS. BEELER.

Gently.

You will not fail them? You cannot fail them, now?

Michaelis looks at Mrs. Beeler, then for a still longer time at Rhoda.

MICHAELIS.

No. — I have waited so long. I have had such deep assurances. I must not fail. I must not fail.

CURTAIN

ACT III

ACT III

The same room, late afternoon of the same day. Mrs. Beeler sits in a large low chair near the window. She has ceased reading, the Testament lying open in her lap. Near the picture, "Pan and the Pilgrim," sits Uncle Abe, with Annie between his knees.

ANNIE.

Pointing at the figure of Pan.

And who 's that?

UNCLE ABE.

Glancing at Mrs. Beeler.

H'sh!

ANNIE.

What 's he doing up there in the bushes, blowing on that funny whistle?

UNCLE ABE.

Look hyah, chil', you jes' wastin' my time! I got frough wif dis hyah fool pictuh, long 'go!

He tries to draw her away; she resists.

ANNIE.

Petulantly.

Uncle Abe! Who is it?

UNCLE ABE.

Whispers, makes big eyes.

That thah's Ole Nick, that's who that thah is! That thah's de Black Man!

Annie, terror-stricken, draws away, and retreats to her mother's chair. Mrs. Beeler rouses from her revery.

MRS. BEELER.

Strokes her child's head.

O, my child, how happy you are to see this while you are so young! You will never forget, will you, dear?

ANNIE.

Fidgeting.

Forget what?

MRS. BEELER.

Tell me that whatever happens to you in the world, you won't forget that once, when you were

a little girl, you saw the Heavens standing open, and felt that God was very near and full of pity for His children.

ANNIE.

About to burst into tears.

I don't know what you 're talking about! I can't hardly breathe, the way people are in this house.

MRS. BEELER.

With a slight sigh.

Never mind. Run out to Aunt Martha.

The child goes into the kitchen, singing slyly, with recovered cheerfulness.

ANNIE.

"Mary an' a' Martha 's jus' gone along,
Mary an' a' Martha 's jus' gone along,
Mary an' a' Martha 's jus' gone along,
Ring dem charmin' bells."

Mrs. Beeler begins to read her Testament. The old negro speaks mysteriously.

UNCLE ABE.

That thah chil' she 's talkin' sense. They 's sumpin' ain' right 'bout dis hyah house.

MRS. BEELER.

Not right? What do you mean?

UNCLE ABE.

Shakes his head dubiously.

Dunno, Mis' Beeler. I 's jes' a ole fool colored pusson been waitin' fer de great Day what de 'Postle done promise. En hyah 's de great Day 'bout to dawn, an' de Lawd's chosen 'bout to show hisse'f in clouds o' glory 'fore de worl', an' lo 'n' behol' — (*he leans closer and whispers*) de Lawd's Chosen One, he 's done got a spell on 'im!

MRS. BEELER.

Shocked and startled.

Uncle Abe!

UNCLE ABE.

Pointing at the "Pan and the Pilgrim."

Why you keep that thah pictuh nail up thah fur?

MRS. BEELER.

My husband likes it.

UNCLE ABE.

Mighty funny kin' o' man, like to hev de Black Man lookin' pop-eyed at folks all day an' all night, puttin' de spell on folks!

MRS. BEELER.

That's not the Black Man.

UNCLE ABE.

That's him, shore's yo' born! Jes' what he looks like. I's seen 'im, more 'n once.

MRS. BEELER.

Seen the Black Man, Uncle?

UNCLE ABE.

Yais, ma am. I's spied 'im, sittin' in de paw-paw bushes in de spring-time, when de snakes a-runnin', an' de jays a-hollerin', and de crick a-talkin' sassy to hisse'f.

He leans nearer, more mysteriously.

En what you s'pose I heerd him whis'lin', fur all de worl' lak dem scan'lous blue-jays?

Chants in a high, trilling voice.

"Chillun, chillun, they ain' no Gawd, they ain' no sin nor no jedgment, they 's jes' spring-time, an' happy days, an' folks carryin' on! Whar 's yo' lil gal, Abe Johnson? Whar 's yo' lil sweet-heart gal?" — An me on'y got religion wintah befo', peekin' roun' pie-eyed, skeered good. En 'fo' you could say "De Lawd 's my Shepherd," kerchunk goes de Black Man in de mud-puddle, change' into a big green bull-frog!

MRS. BEELER.

You just imagined all that.

UNCLE ABE.

Indignant.

Jes' 'magine! Don' I know de Devil when I sees him, near 'nough to say "Howdy"?

MRS. BEELER.

There is n't any Devil.

UNCLE ABE.

Astounded.

Ain't no Devil?

MRS. BEELER.

Touching her breast.

Only here.

The old negro stares at her, then at the picture, shaking his head dubiously. Rhoda enters by the street door, carrying a large bunch of Easter lilies.

RHODA.

Kissing her aunt.

Still sitting up! You 're not strong enough yet to do this. See, I've brought you some Easter lilies.

She hands one to Mrs. Beeler and arranges the others in a vase on the table.

How do you do, Uncle Abe?

UNCLE ABE.

With recovered exaltation.

I 's awake an' a-watchin', honey!

Uncle Abe goes out into the kitchen, pausing to stoop over the lilies and smell them, with shut eyes.

MRS. BEELER.

After a pause.

Rhoda!

RHODA.

At the table, arranging flowers.

What, Aunt Mary?

MRS. BEELER.

Come here.

Rhoda approaches.

Closer. Sit here.

She draws her down on a low stool beside her own chair.

Rhoda!

RHODA.

You must n't excite yourself. You must keep your strength.

MRS. BEELER.

I shall be strong enough. — Are the people still gathering from the town?

RHODA.

Yes, and they keep coming in from other places.

MRS. BEELER.

Are there many of them?

RHODA.

Many! Many! — It 's as if the whole world knew.

MRS. BEELER.

The more there are, the greater will be the witness.

Pause.

When do you think he will go out to them?

RHODA.

They believe he is waiting for Easter morning.

MRS. BEELER.

Yes, that is what he is waiting for. Seth has told me.

RHODA.

Stares at her in frightened interrogation.

Who-o?

MRS. BEELER.

My dear brother, Seth.

RHODA.

Following the direction of her gaze.

Aunt Mary! There 's nothing there.

MRS. BEELER.

Her tension relaxing.

No. He 's gone now.

RHODA.

Where did you see him?

MRS. BEELER.

Points with the lily.

There, beside the lilies.

Pause.

This was always his favorite room. I see him here oftenest.

She caresses Rhoda's hair.

Does that disturb you?

RHODA.

Shakes her head.

Not much. I 've got used to that. It is n't that.

She bows her head on the arm of her aunt's chair.

MRS. BEELER.

What is it, Rhoda?

RHODA.

I — don't know. I can't tell you.

Mrs. Beeler draws the girl's face up and looks at it intently. She speaks in a hesitating way.

MRS. BEELER.

Do you know, Rhoda, I have sometimes thought —

Pause.

You won't be hurt?

RHODA.

No.

MRS. BEELER.

I have sometimes thought there was something about you which —

RHODA.

You must tell me.

MRS. BEELER.

I have seen *him* (*she indicates the upper room*) look at you so strangely. Like — like the pilgrim there in the picture (*she points*) when he hears that heathen creature playing on the pipe.

The girl, avoiding her eyes, draws away, rises, takes the lily from her aunt's lap, gathers the others up from the table, and starts toward the door.

MRS. BEELER.

Vaguely alarmed.

What are you doing?

RHODA.

Low, passionately.

I am going to throw them out. They stifle me!

MRS. BEELER.

Rises, with a horrified expression.

Rhoda!

She rescues the lilies, and replaces them in the vase. She speaks after a moment of painful silence.

So you are going to be against him, too!

RHODA.

Mastering her excitement.

No, no! I meant nothing by it. Flowers often affect me so.

Mrs. Beeler looks at her, troubled; then, as she sinks exhausted into her chair, she looks at the picture.

MRS. BEELER.

Do you think your uncle Mat would mind if we took that picture down?

Rhoda unpins the print from the wall, rolls it up, and lays it on the bookshelf. She comes to her aunt again.

RHODA.

Auntie—

MRS. BEELER.

Yes?

RHODA.

I think I ought to go away.

MRS. BEELER.

Astonished.

Go away? Where?

RHODA.

Out of this house.

MRS. BEELER.

Why?

RHODA.

So as not to—hinder him.

MRS. BEELER.

Surprised.

Hinder him? Why should you hinder him?

Rhoda leans down and kisses her aunt's hair, without answering.

MRS. BEELER.

Caressing her head.

There, you have taken what I said too seriously. It was nothing but a sick woman's imagination.

Martha enters from the kitchen.

MARTHA.

Mary, you'd ought to be abed. You're tempting Providence.

Pause.

I saw your doctor down in the village, and he allowed he'd come up to see you this afternoon. He was all on end about your bein' able to walk.

RHODA.

I did n't know you had a doctor now.

MRS. BEELER.

Yes. He's a young man who's just come here to build up a practice. — I think I *will* rest awhile.

She rises and walks unsteadily. The others hasten to help her, but she motions them back.

MARTHA.

It does beat all! Let us help you to bed, Mary.

MRS. BEELER.

No. It's so good to feel that I can walk alone. I'll just lie down on the couch.

Mr. Beeler enters from kitchen and crosses to help his wife. The others give place to him.

MRS. BEELER.

O, Mat, our good days are coming back! I shall be strong and well for you again.

BEELER.

Yes, Mary. There will be nothing to separate us any more.

MRS. BEELER.

Points at his books.

Not even — them?

He goes to the alcove, takes the books from the shelf, and lays them on the bench in the corner. Mrs. Beeler points to the pictures of Darwin and Spencer.

Nor them?

He unpins the pictures, lays them upon the heap of books, and returns to her.

You don't know how happy that makes me!

They go out by the hall door.

MARTHA.

With Rhoda, has looked on in silence; she points at the pile in the corner.

That 's a good riddance of bad rubbish! — You 'd better help me with the baskets. Them folks will starve to death, if the neighborhood round don't give 'em a bite to eat.

They go out by the kitchen door. There is a knock at the outer door. As Mr. Beeler reënters, the knock is repeated. He admits Dr. George Littlefield, a man of thirty, with an intelligent, rather dissolute face, and careful, citified dress.

BEELER.

Good afternoon, doctor.

LITTLEFIELD.

Pointing through the window.

They 're just laying siege to you, ain't they? I guess they won't let your man give them the slip this time. — Where do you keep him?

BEELER.

With reserve.

He is upstairs.

LITTLEFIELD.

Focosely.

Loose?

BEELER.

With severity.

He has given my wife the use of herself. She walked alone to-day, the first time for five years.

LITTLEFIELD.

Sobered.

I beg your pardon. I understand how you feel about it. And even if it proves to be only temporary —

BEELER.

Startled.

Temporary?

LITTLEFIELD.

Permanent, let us hope. Anyway, it's a very remarkable case. Astonishing. I've only known one just like it — personally, I mean.

BEELER.

Astounded.

Just like it?

LITTLEFIELD.

Well, pretty much. Happened in Chicago when I was an interne at St. Luke's.

BEELER.

Then it's not — there's nothing — peculiar about it?

LITTLEFIELD.

Yes, sir-ree! Mighty peculiar!

BEELER.

I mean nothing, as you might say, outside nature?

LITTLEFIELD.

O, bless you, you can't get outside nature now-a-days!

Moves his hands in a wide circle.

Tight as a drum, no air-holes. — Devilish queer, though, the power of the mind over the body.

Assuming his professional manner.

Can I see your wife?

BEELER.

Just laid down. Guess she 'd better rest a minute.

LITTLEFIELD.

Lights a cigarette, and leans on the edge of the table, with one leg swinging.

When I was at Ann Arbor, we blindfolded a chap in a fraternity initiation, and told him to get ready to have his arm branded with a red-hot poker. Damned if he don't carry the scar to this day, though we only touched him with a piece of ice! — Fact!

BEELER.

His native skepticism slowly reviving.

Are you sure this case is just the same?

LITTLEFIELD.

Precisely; with religious excitement to help out.

He points outside.

They're getting ready for Kingdom-come over it, out yonder!

BEELER.

They're worked up enough, if that's all that's needed.

LITTLEFIELD.

Worked up! Elijah in a chariot of fire, distributing cure-alls as he mounts to glory. They've got their ascension robes on, especially the niggers!

There is a rap at the outer door. Mr. Beeler opens the door slightly, looks out, then admits the Rev. John Culpepper, a severe and formal man, who shakes hands with him solemnly.

BEELER.

O, it's you, Mr. Culpepper. We have to keep ourselves barricaded.

Locks outer door again.

Dr. Littlefield, make you acquainted with the Reverend John Culpepper, my wife's church.

CULPEPPER.

Shaking hands.

Dr. Littlefield. — The title is, I imagine, secular.

LITTLEFIELD.

Airily.

Sorry to say. — Pills and powders. — Pottering line of business, by the side of what we're invited to witness here.

CULPEPPER.

With severity.

I take it you are the late Dr. Martin's successor.

LITTLEFIELD.

I have the honor.

CULPEPPER.

Old Dr. Martin would never have taken a flippant tone in such a crisis.

LITTLEFIELD.

Flippant? By no means! A little light-headed. My profession is attacked. At its very roots, sir. —

With relish.

As far as that goes, I'm afraid yours is, too.

CULPEPPER.

To Beeler, ignoring the gibe.

Am I to understand that you countenance these proceedings?

BEELER.

Pointing to the invalid-chair.

If your wife had spent five years helpless in that chair, I guess you 'd countenance any proceedings that set her on her feet.

CULPEPPER.

Towers threateningly.

If your wife is the woman she was, she would rather sit helpless forever beside the Rock of Ages, than dance and flaunt herself in the house of idols!

BEELER.

With deprecating humor.

O, I guess she ain't doin' much flauntin' of herself in any house of idols. — Doctor here says it 's all natural enough. Seems to think this kind of cure is the coming thing.

LITTLEFIELD.

To the preacher's sourly questioning look.

The Brother would drive us doctors into the poor-house, if he could keep up the pace. And you preachers, too, far as that goes. If he could keep up the pace. Well (*sucks at his cigarette deliberately*), lucky for us, he can't keep it up.

CULPEPPER.

Disdaining inquiry, to Beeler.

Can I see your wife?

BEELER.

All right, gentlemen.

Opens hall door. The minister goes out; Mr. Beeler detains Dr. Littlefield as he asks —

Why can't he keep it up?

LITTLEFIELD.

Throwing away his cigarette.

Can't stand the strain. — O, I have n't seen him operate, but I 'm willing to bet his miracles take it out of him!

Enter from kitchen Martha, and a little after, Rhoda, with baskets of provisions, which they finish packing, fetching other articles from the cupboard.

MARTHA.

I'd like to know what they think we're made of, with butter at twenty-five cents a pound and flour worth its weight in diamonds!

RHODA.

All the neighbors are helping, and none of them with our cause for thankfulness.

MARTHA.

That's no sign you should go plasterin' on that butter like you was a brick-layer tryin' to bust the contractor!

She takes the bread from Rhoda and scrapes the butter thin.

RHODA.

As the clock strikes five.

It's time for Aunt Mary to have her tea. Shall I make it?

MARTHA.

You make it! Not unless you want to lay her flat of her back again!

As she flounces out, Annie enters from the hall. She points with one hand at the retreating Martha, with the other toward her mother's room.

ANNIE.

Sings with sly emphasis.

"Mary an' a' Martha 's jus' gone along,
Mary an' a' Martha 's jus' gone along,
Mary an' a' Martha 's jus' gone along,
Ring dem charmin' bells."

RHODA.

Looks attentively at the child.

What 's got into you, little imp?

ANNIE.

Brazenly.

I 've been peeping through mamma's key-hole.

RHODA.

That 's not nice.

ANNIE.

I know it, but the minister 's in there, and Dr. Littlefield.

RHODA.

Startled.

Who?

ANNIE.

You know, mamma's doctor.

Recollecting.

O, he 's never come since you 've been here.

RHODA.

In a changed voice, as she takes the child by the shoulders.

What does he look like?

ANNIE.

O, he's too red in the face, and looks kind of — insulting — and he wears the most *beautiful* neckties, and —

Exhausted by her efforts at description.

O, I don't know!

Rhoda releases her and walks to the window, where she stands looking out.

ANNIE.

Sings, as she goes out by the kitchen door.

"Free grace, undyin' love,
Free grace, undyin' love,
Free grace, undyin' love,
Ring dem lovely bells."

Dr. Littlefield enters from Mrs. Beeler's room. He speaks back to Beeler on the threshold.

LITTLEFIELD.

Just want to get my kit.

Looking for his medicine case, he approaches Rhoda, who still has her back turned.

Beg pardon!

She faces him. He starts back in surprise. She remains looking at him in a dreamy way, as if scarcely seeing him.

Bless my soul and body! Rhoda Williams!

She says nothing, but watches him listlessly as he closes the hall door, returns to her, and stands somewhat disconcerted.

Here of all places.

RHODA.

Mrs. Beeler is my aunt.

LITTLEFIELD.

Well, well! The world is small.

Pause.

Been here long?

RHODA.

Only a month.

LITTLEFIELD.

And before that?

RHODA.

It's a long story. Besides, you would n't understand.

LITTLEFIELD.

You might let me try. What in the world have you been doing all this time?

RHODA.

I have been searching for something.

LITTLEFIELD.

What was it?

RHODA.

Slowly.

My own lost self. — My own — lost — soul.

LITTLEFIELD.

Amused at her solemnity.

You 're a queer bundle of goods. Always were. Head full of solemn notions about life, and at the same time, when it came to a lark — O, I 'm no grandmother, but when you got on your high horse —. Well!

He waves his hands expressively.

RHODA.

Bursts out.

The great town, the people, the noise, and the lights — after seventeen years of life on a dead prairie, where I 'd hardly heard a laugh or seen a happy face!

Her manner changes.

All the same, the prairie had me still.

LITTLEFIELD.

You don't mean you went back to the farm?

RHODA.

I mean that the years I'd spent out there in that endless stretch of earth and sky — !

She breaks off, with a weary gesture.

There 's no use going into that. You would n't understand.

LITTLEFIELD.

No, I walk on simple shoe leather and eat mere victuals. — Just the same, it was n't square of you to clear out that way — vanish into air without a word or a sign.

RHODA.

Looking at him steadily.

You know very well why I went.

LITTLEFIELD.

Returning her gaze, unabashed, chants with meaning and relish.

"Hey diddle, diddle,
The cat and the fiddle,
The cow jumped over the moon."

Rhoda takes up the basket and goes toward the outer door. He intercepts her.

RHODA.

Let me pass.

LITTLEFIELD.

You're not taking part in this camp-meeting enthusiasm, are you?

RHODA.

Yes.

As he stares at her, his astonishment changes to amusement; he chuckles to himself, then bursts out laughing, as in humorous reminiscence.

LITTLEFIELD.

Bless my soul! And to think that only a couple of little years ago— O, *bless* my soul!

The stair door opens. Michaelis appears. His face is flushed, his hair disordered, and his whole person expresses a feverish and precarious exaltation.

MICHAELIS.

Looks at Littlefield with vague query, then at Rhoda.

Excuse me, I am very thirsty. I came down for a glass of water.

Rhoda goes to the kitchen door, where she turns. The doctor puts on a pair of nose-glasses, and scans Mi-

chaelis with interest. He holds out his hand, which Michaelis takes.

LITTLEFIELD.

We ought to know each other. We're colleagues, in a way.

MICHAELIS.

Colleagues?

LITTLEFIELD.

In a way, yes. I'm a practicing physician.

Exit Rhoda.

You seem to have the call on us professionals, to judge by the number of your clients out yonder.

He points out of the window.

To say nothing of Exhibit One!

He points to the hall door.

MICHAELIS.

Vaguely.

I — I don't know that I —

Rhoda enters from the kitchen, with water, which he takes.

Thank you.

He drinks thirstily.

Mr. Beeler opens the hall door; he looks at the group, taken aback.

BEELER.

Oh — !

LITTLEFIELD.

I stopped to chat with your niece. She and I happen to be old acquaintances.

BEELER.

Stares.

You don't say? — Would you mind coming in here for a minute?

LITTLEFIELD.

Following him out.

What's up?

BEELER.

My wife's got it in her head that she's called upon to —

Door closes.

MICHAELIS.

Has followed Littlefield with his eyes; sets down the glass, and turns slowly to Rhoda.

Who is that?

RHODA.

My aunt's doctor.

MICHAELIS.

You know him well?

RHODA.

Yes. — No.

MICHAELIS.

What does that mean?

RHODA.

I have n't seen him for nearly two years. — I can't remember much about the person I was, two years ago.

MICHAELIS.

Yes! Yes! I understand.

He turns away, lifting his hands, speaking half to himself.

That these lives of ours should be poured like a jelly, from one mould into another, until God Himself cannot remember what they were two years ago, or two hours ago!

RHODA.

After a silence.

Why do you say that?

He does not answer; she comes closer and speaks impulsively.

Tell me what is troubling you.

MICHAELIS.

Looks at her intently.

You ask that?

Rhoda does not answer. He turns from her, and walks nervously about, taking up small objects and putting them down again, in his peculiar manner.

RHODA.

Following him with her eyes.

Last month — out West — were there many people there?

MICHAELIS.

No. — Two or three.

RHODA.

The papers said —

MICHAELIS.

When the crowd began to gather, I — went away.

RHODA.

Why?

MICHAELIS.

My time had not come.

He has stopped before the map and stands gazing at it.

RHODA.

Has it come now?

Michaelis looks at her, then again at the map. She repeats the words, coming closer.

Has your time come now?

MICHAELIS.

Yes.

RHODA.

How do you know?

MICHAELIS.

Points at the map.

It is written there!

RHODA.

Looks at the map, puzzled.

How do you mean, written there?

MICHAELIS.

Can't you see it?

RHODA.

I see the map, nothing more.

MICHAELIS.

Points again, gazing fixedly.

It seems to me to be written in fire.

RHODA.

What seems written?

MICHAELIS.

My life — my destiny.

RHODA.

Tell me what you mean! Explain to me.

MICHAELIS.

Slowly.

For five years I have gone up and down this land, east and west, north and south, stopping to earn money enough to live, then on again, always on foot, driven by something — how shall I tell you? Now it was like a voice, now like a finger pointing. Sometimes it came to me at my work, or in sleep, or in sickness, and thrust me on, on, like the hand of an angel on my neck. Then, for a little while, the hand would be lifted, and peace would flow into me, and with it power! Power to heal with one touch of this hand, the souls and bodies of men. But after one or two had risen up healed, the Voice would cry, "Not here, not yet!" and the hand would be on my neck, pushing me on. — Till yesterday. I did n't see what it all meant — till yesterday.

RHODA.

What did you see — yesterday?

MICHAELIS.

What I have been doing, all these five years.

RHODA.

Since your work began?

MICHAELIS.

It has never begun. — That is what I have been waiting for. For five years I have been waiting. — Many times I have thought, "Now," and some man or woman has risen up healed, and looked at me with eyes of prophecy. But the Voice would cry, "On, on!" and I would go forward, driven by a force and a will not my own.

Pause.

I did n't know what it all meant, but I know now.

He points at the map, his manner transformed with excitement and exaltation.

It is written there. It is written in letters of fire. My eyes are opened, and I see!

RHODA.

Following his gaze, then looking at him again, awed and bewildered.

What is it that you see?

MICHAELIS.

The Cross!

RHODA.

I — I don't understand.

MICHAELIS.

All those places where the hand was lifted for a moment, and the power flowed into me —

He places his finger at various points on the map; these points lie in two transverse lines, one running roughly north and south, the other east and west.

Look! There was such a place, and there another, and there, and there. And there was one, and there, and there. — Do you see?

RHODA.

I see. — It makes a kind of cross.

MICHAELIS.

You see it too! And do you see what it means — this sign that my feet have marked for five blind years, winter and summer, across the length and breadth of a continent? — And that crowd of stricken souls out yonder, raised up as by miracle, their broken bodies and tortured spirits crying to be healed, crying with a great hope and a great despair — do you see what they mean?

RHODA.

In a steady voice.

I see what all these things mean. They mean what

my aunt said this morning. They mean that your great hour has come.

MICHAELIS.

My hour, my hour!

He comes nearer.

I knew a young Indian once, a Hopi boy, who made songs and sang them to his people. There was nothing on the earth, or in the air, that his songs did not touch and glorify: the lives of plants and insects, of birds and beasts and men, the sacred rain-cloud and the living face of the heavens. One evening we sat on the roof of the chief's house, and talked of the summer festival near at hand, when the singers of many pueblos would sing for the year's prize. We knew that our singer would win, and asked him to sing once more for us before the trial. He shook his head, rose up with a face of trouble, and went away in the starlight. The next morning I found him among the rocks under the mesa, with an empty bottle by his side. — He never sang again! Drunkenness had taken him. He never sang again, or made another verse.

RHODA.

What has that to do with you? It's not — ? You don't mean that you — ?

MICHAELIS.

No. There is a stronger drink, for such as I am!

RHODA.

Forcing herself to go on.

What — "stronger drink"?

MICHAELIS.

Wildly.

The wine of this world! The wine-bowl that crowns the feasting table of the children of this world.

RHODA.

What do you mean by — the wine of this world?

MICHAELIS.

At the window.

You know that! Every woman knows.

He points out.

Out there, at this moment, in city and country, everywhere, even to the utmost isles of the sea, souls, thousands upon thousands of souls, are dashing in pieces the cup that holds the wine of heaven, the wine of God's shed blood, and lifting the cup

that holds the wine of the glory of this earth! Look!

He points at the sunset-flushed sky.

The very sky is blood-red with the lifted cups. And we two are in the midst of them. Listen what I sing there, on the hills of light in the sunset: "O, how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of my beloved!"

A song rises outside. Rhoda takes her hat and cloak from the closet, goes to the outer door, and unlocks it. At the sound, he turns to her, aroused as if from trance.

MICHAELIS.

(*Following her.*)

Where are you going?

RHODA.

Don't ask me where.

MICHAELIS.

You are going — away?

RHODA.

I ought to have gone before, but I was not sure —

MICHAELIS.

Sure of what?

RHODA.

How it was — between us.

MICHAELIS.

Vaguely.

I — we were saying —. Listen!

The singing grows louder and nearer. He comes to her, grasping her arm in nervous apprehension.

MICHAELIS.

For God's sake, tell me, what is that?

She looks at him astonished and frightened. He speaks to himself, as the shattered framework of his thought settles again into shape.

Yes. Now I remember.

RHODA.

You are ill! you are dreadfully ill!

MICHAELIS.

Touching his head.

It's as if a door shut here in my brain. It always opens again, at once. —

Pause. He speaks half stealthily, as if in fear.

Are there many people — waiting — out there?

RHODA.

You know, yourself. Hundreds, if not thousands.

MICHAELIS.

Walks about.

Thousands. — Thousands of thousands! —

He stops beside her.

You won't leave me alone?

RHODA.

Hesitates, looks at him searchingly, then speaks with sudden decision.

No.

MICHAELIS.

Continuing his walk.

Thousands of thousands!

The hall door opens, Dr. Littlefield and the Rev. Culpepper enter. The latter stares inquiringly from Michaelis to the Doctor, who nods affirmatively, and adjusts his glasses.

CULPEPPER.

Mutters to Littlefield.

Nonsense! Sacrilegious nonsense!

LITTLEFIELD.

Same tone.

I've done my best.

Behind them comes Mrs. Beeler, supported by her husband. At the same moment Martha enters from the kitchen, with tea; Uncle Abe and Annie follow.

BEELER.

On the threshold.

Mary, take another minute to consider.

Mrs. Beeler, as if without hearing this protest, gazes at Michaelis, and advances toward him with a gesture of the arms which causes her supporter to loosen his hold, though he follows slightly behind, to render aid if necessary.

MRS. BEELER.

To Michaelis.

Tell me that I may go out, and stand before them for a testimony!

LITTLEFIELD.

Coming forward.

As a physician, I must formally protest.

CULPEPPER.

And I as a minister of the Gospel.

MRS. BEELER.

To Michaelis, with a nervous, despairing gesture.

Speak to them! Explain to them! I am too weak.

There is a sound of excited voices outside, near at hand, then a sudden trample of footsteps outside the entrance door, which Rhoda has left unlocked in the previous scene. As Beeler goes hurriedly to the door it bursts open, and a young woman with a baby in her arms crowds past him, and stands looking wildly about the room.

BEELER.

As he forces the others back.

You can't come in here, my friends! Stand back!

He closes the door forcibly upon them, and locks it. The woman gazes from one to another of the men. The old negro points at Michaelis. She advances to him, holding out the child.

MOTHER.

Don't let my baby die! For Christ's sake, don't let him die!

He touches her head tenderly, and signs to Rhoda to take her and the child into the inner room.

MICHAELIS.

Take her with you. I will come.

RHODA.

With gentle urgency, to the woman.

Come with me.

She leads the woman out through the hall door.

MICHAELIS.

To Mrs. Beeler, as he points outside.

Tell them to wait until to-morrow at sunrise.

Mr. and Mrs. Beeler move toward the entrance door; some of the others start after, some linger, curious to know what will happen to the child.

MICHAELIS.

With a commanding gesture.

Go, all of you!

The room is cleared except for Littlefield, who goes last, stops in the doorway, closes the door, and approaches Michaelis. He speaks in a friendly and reasonable tone.

LITTLEFIELD.

You're on the wrong track, my friend.

MICHAELIS.

I asked you to go.

LITTLEFIELD.

I heard you. I want to say a word or two first. For your own sake and for that woman's sake, you'd better listen. You can't do anything for her baby.

MICHAELIS.

Is that for you to say?

LITTLEFIELD.

Yes, sir! It is most decidedly for me to say.

MICHAELIS.

By what authority?

LITTLEFIELD.

By the authority of medical knowledge. — You are a

very remarkable man, with a very remarkable gift. In your own field, I take off my hat to you. If you knew yourself as science knows you, you might make the greatest doctor living. Your handling of Mrs. Beeler's case was masterly. But — come right down to it — *you* did n't work the cure.

MICHAELIS.

I know that.

LITTLEFIELD.

Who do you think did?

MICHAELIS.

Raising his hand.

He whom I serve, and whom you blaspheme!

LITTLEFIELD.

No, sir! He whom *I* serve, and whom *you* blaspheme. — Nature. — Or rather, Mrs. Beeler did it herself.

MICHAELIS.

Startled.

Herself?

LITTLEFIELD.

You gave her a jog, so to speak, here, or here (*touches his brain and heart*), and she did the rest. But you can't do the same to everybody. Above all, you can't do it to a baby in arms. There 's nothing either here or here (*touches brain and heart*) to get hold of. I 'm a modest man, and as I say, in your own field you 're a wonder. But in a case like this one — (*he points to the hall door*) I 'm worth a million of you.

MICHAELIS.

Moves as if to give place to him, with a challenging gesture toward the door.

Try!

LITTLEFIELD.

Shrugs.

Not much! The woman would n't listen to me. And if she did, and I failed — O, I 'm no miracle worker! — they 'd make short work of me, out there.

He points out, and adds significantly, —

They 're in no mood for failures, out there.

Michaelis's gaze, as if in spite of himself, goes to the window. He rests his hand on the table, to stop its trembling. Littlefield goes on, watching him with interest.

Will you permit me one more observation, as a scientific man?

Michaelis's eyes come back to Littlefield's face.

Nervously speaking, you are a high-power machine. The dynamo that runs you is what is called "faith," "religious inspiration," or what-not. It 's a dynamo which now-a-days easily gets out of order. Well, my friend, as a doctor I warn you that your little dynamo is out of order.

His voice becomes harder.

In other words, you 've lost your grip. You 're in a funk.

Rhoda opens the hall door and looks anxiously at the two. Michaelis approaches her, with averted eyes. As he is about to pass out, she speaks timidly.

RHODA.

Do you want me?

MICHAELIS.

In a toneless voice.

No.

She watches him until the inner door shuts, then closes the hall door slowly. She and Littlefield confront each other in silence for a moment, across the width of the room.

RHODA.

Forcing herself to speak calmly.

Please go.

LITTLEFIELD.

Drops his professional tone for one of cynical badinage.

You make up well as one of the Wise Virgins, whose lamps are trimmed and burning for the Bridegroom to pass by. I hope that Personage won't disappoint you, nor the several hundred others out yonder whose lamps are trimmed and burning.

RHODA.

More tensely.

Please go.

LITTLEFIELD.

Suppose the procession *does n't* pass, owing to (*waves his hand airily*) some hitch in the ceremonies. What do you say, then, to our using the little lamp, so neatly trimmed and burning, to light

a supper-table down town, where we can — celebrate our paper wedding, eh? Or is it tin, by now?

RHODA.

Passionately.

If God does not refute you, and put you and your kind to shame, then — yes! I stake my soul on it.

LITTLEFIELD.

As he goes out.

Good! A bargain.

Outside, another hymn rises. Rhoda turns and leans against the hall door, her face hidden, her hands clasped above her head.

CURTAIN

ACT IV

ACT IV

Before daylight. The sofa has been drawn in front of the fire, and on the table near the sofa a lamp burns. Rhoda opens the hall door, the young mother, in the passage, detaining her.

MOTHER.

Don't leave me.

RHODA.

You must n't worry.

MOTHER.

I 'm afraid.

RHODA.

Think of those others out there, who are waiting too, without the glimpse of comfort you 've had.

MOTHER.

Bursts out.

I ain't had no comfort! When I heard him pray for my child, I — I don't know — I kept sayin' to myself, — "O God, it 's me that 's stretchin' out

my hands to you, not him. Don't punish me for his cold words!"

RHODA.

Shocked and reproving.

Cold words!

MOTHER.

Yes. I know it's wrong. I'll try to feel different. It's because I ain't had nothin' to do with religion for so long.

RHODA.

I shall be here if you want me.

She kisses the woman, closes the door upon her, and with a gesture of weariness lies down upon the sofa. The hall door opens again. Annie, in her night-dress, peeps out and calls in a whisper.

ANNIE.

Rho!—Cousin Rho!

RHODA.

Sleepily.

Yes?

ANNIE.

Comes to the sofa.

I want to stay with you. I 'm so frightened.

Rhoda draws the child down on the sofa beside her. There is a moment's quiet, which is broken by Annie's petulant and anxious voice.

ANNIE.

Rhoda!

RHODA.

Yes.

ANNIE.

What 's the matter with mamma?

RHODA.

She 's cured, dear.

ANNIE.

Whining.

I don't want her to be cured! I want her to be like she always has been.

After a moment's hush.

What 's the matter with all those people out there?

She bursts out crying and clings feverishly to Rhoda.

O, what 's going to happen to us?

RHODA.

Soothing her.

Hush, Annie. Go to sleep, there's a dear. Don't cry.

The child's sobbing gradually ceases. Mr. Beeler enters in an old figured dressing-gown and slippers, carrying a candle. He peers about.

BEELER.

Annie here?

RHODA.

Sleepily.

Yes, Uncle.

He picks up the books which he has previously thrown in the corner, and replaces them in the shelves. He lifts the prints from the bench, gazes at them meditatively, and tacks them up in their former places, including the "Pan and the Pilgrim." At the noise of hammering Rhoda gives up the attempt to sleep and leans on her elbow, watching him.

BEELER.

With a sheepish effort at unconcern.

Just tackin' up my pictures again.

RHODA.

Why are you doing that?

BEELER.

Doctor says it's a natural cure. Says the new medical books explain it.

RHODA.

Do you think, because they give it a name, that they explain it?

BEELER.

Bursts out petulantly.

You women don't want things explained! You prefer hocus-pocus. Take Martha there. Forty-four years she waddles around without an idea in her noggin but housework, then all of a sudden she ups with — (*imitates her*) "You can't keep a spirit in its grave, not when it's a mind to come out." Mystery! Lolly-pop. You women would live on it if we'd let you.

RHODA.

Whether you let us or not, we do live on it, and so does the whole world.

BEELER.

What the world lives on is facts.

He points at the books.

Hard-boiled sci-en-ti-fic facts!

Points at the "Pan and the Pilgrim."

With a few jokes thrown in for seasoning, like that there.

RHODA.

Looking at the picture, indifferent.

What does it mean?

BEELER.

Studying it, becomes absorbed and amused.

Well, Pan, he was a kind of a nature god. The old Romans thought him out, to stand for a lot of things.

RHODA.

What kind of things?

BEELER.

Well, natural things, with plenty of sap and mischief in 'em. Growin' plants, and frisky animals,

and young folks in love. — There he sits playin' Jenny-come-kiss-me on his dod-gasted mouth-organ, when along comes one of these fellows with religion on the brain, like our friend upstairs — pikin' for Jerusalem, to get a saint's toe-nail and a splinter of the true cross. — He won't never get to Jerusalem, not this trip!

Pause. He points at the stairs, with relish.

Like to see our friend meet up with *that* boy. He 'd fix him!

RHODA.

After a pause.

Won't you please take Annie back? I 'm so dreadfully tired.

BEELER.

With sympathy, as he takes up the child.

Try and doze off again, girl. It 'll be a hard day for you, likely.

He goes out, carrying Annie.

Martha enters from the kitchen, with a pan of dough, which she places before the grate to rise, after mending the fire. Beeler reënters.

BEELER.

Speaks low, so as not to arouse Rhoda.

You potterin' round too, Marthy?

MARTHA.

With heat, but following his hint to speak low.

Guess your barn 'd 'a' been afire, 'f I had n't been a-potterin' round.

BEELER.

Starting.

I warned 'em about fire.

MARTHA.

Hay-mow ketched. If I had n't been there to put it out, we 'd 'a' been without a roof by now.

BEELER.

As he goes out.

Guess I better go keep an eye out.

MARTHA.

Guess you had!

She moves about the room, speaking low to herself.

I ain't got nothin' agin religion, but it does make mortal fools of folks.

Pause.

See Mat's nailed up his pictures again.

She comes to Rhoda, and leans over to see if she is sleeping; throws a cover over her, turns down the lamp and places a large tray behind it, so that the couch is thrown into deep shadow. Exit into kitchen.

Michaelis enters from the stair door, carrying a candle. He is in a high state of nervous tension, his shirt open at the throat, his hair disordered. Lazarus appears in the door, watching him anxiously. Michaelis, at the window, sinks on the bench and peers out. Lazarus steals in and crouches at his feet, resting his forehead on Michaelis's knee. Michaelis puts one hand on the boy's head, and they remain for a time silent and motionless.

MICHAELIS.

Huskily.

Lazarus!

LAZARUS.

Low.

Master!

MICHAELIS.

Tell me again what you saw in the country of death.

LAZARUS.

Dark. Dark. See nothing. Hear nothing.

MICHAELIS.

And then?

LAZARUS.

Somebody begin to talk — small, far off. One voice, two voices.

MICHAELIS.

And then?

LAZARUS.

Good Spirit come out of the dark woods. You come too.

MICHAELIS.

In a tense whisper.

How did you know it was the Good Spirit?

LAZARUS.

Like picture in church at San Pablo.

MICHAELIS.

And — then?

LAZARUS.

Good Spirit kiss you, call you his son. You stoop down, kiss me too. Tell me to get up, and I get up — slow, like from deep, deep water.

Pause.

MICHAELIS.

Draws the boy up close and looks intently into his eyes.

Are you sure He said "Son"?

LAZARUS.

Yes. Son.

From outside a distant sound of singing is heard, hoarse voices of men and treble of women. At the sound Michaelis springs up, and begins to pace the room. He catches sight of Rhoda, pauses in his distracted walk, and makes a gesture to the boy, who has also observed her, to leave the room. Lazarus obeys with reluctance, lingering at the door until Michaelis turns upon him with a touch of sternness. Michaelis removes the screen from the lamp, and bends over Rhoda, studying her face. She wakes, and starts up frightened and bewildered.

RHODA.

What — what is the matter? — O, you frightened me so!

Michaelis turns away without answering.

What has happened? Why are you here?

MICHAELIS.

Nothing. — It's nearly morning.

RHODA.

Collecting her thoughts with difficulty.

I was dreaming. — Such a strange dream!

MICHAELIS.

What did you dream?

RHODA.

I thought it was morning; the sun had risen, and— and you were out there, in the midst of the crowd.

MICHAELIS.

Excitedly.

Go on! — What happened?

RHODA.

I — I can't remember the rest.

MICHAELIS.

Grasps her arm, speaks low.

You *must* remember! — Did I — succeed?

RHODA.

Helplessly.

I — It's all a blur in my mind.

MICHAELIS.

Darkly.

You don't want me to know that, in your dream, I failed.

RHODA.

No, no! — That is not so.

Pause. She speaks with hesitation.

Perhaps this is not the time. Perhaps you are not ready.

MICHAELIS.

What does that matter? *He* is ready.

RHODA.

How do you know that?

MICHAELIS.

Points at the map.

I have told you it is written there. It is written in letters of fire.

RHODA.

Gazing at the map, with mystic conviction.

You will succeed! You must succeed!

He paces the room; then stops, confronting her, and pointing toward her room.

MICHAELIS.

How is the child?

She hesitates. He repeats the words anxiously.

How is the child?

RHODA.

It — it is better, I think. It will get well, I am sure.

MICHAELIS.

If it does not, I am judged.

RHODA.

O, don't say that or think it!

MICHAELIS.

I am weighed in the balance and found wanting.

RHODA.

You cannot hang the whole issue and meaning of our life upon so slight a thread.

MICHAELIS.

The whole issue and meaning of the world hangs on threads as slight. If this one *is* slight. To the mother it is not slight, nor to the God who put into her eyes, as she looked at me, all the doubt and question of the suffering earth. O, I have tried to hide myself behind the doctors and the men of learning! I have tried to think that a child's mind is not open for the spirit of healing to enter. But I know well that that little life in my hand is as clay in the hands of the potter. I know that if I cannot help here, it is because my ministry has been taken from me and given to another, to some greater one to come, who shall be strong where I am weak, and faithful where I am unfaithful.

A song rises outside, distant.

RHODA.

Comes closer to him.

Tell me this. Speak plainly to me this once. Is it because of me that your weakness and unfaith have come upon you?

MICHAELIS.

Half to himself.

Weakness, unfaith! Has it come to that?

RHODA.

You know it has come to that. Is it because of me?

MICHAELIS.

After a pause, looks at her steadily.

Yes.

RHODA.

Because of something in me — some wickedness, some taint?

MICHAELIS.

No! You are all purity, all goodness.

Rhoda makes a gesture of denial. He goes on without heeding.

No, it is not so either. It is not so that you walk before me, and look at me, and look away from me,

and wound me with love! But you stand apart, in a world where neither goodness nor evil have ever come. Before creation, beyond time, God not yet risen from His sleep, you stand and call to me, and I listen in a dream that I dreamed before Eden. —

He comes closer, his passion mounting.

All my life long I have known you, and fled from you. I have heard you singing on the hills of sleep and have fled from you into the waking day. I have seen you in the spring forest, dancing and throwing your webs of sunlight to snare me; on moonlit mountains, laughing and calling; in the streets of crowded cities, beckoning and disappearing in the crowd, — and everywhere I have fled from you, holding above my head the sign of God's power in me, my gift and my mission. — What use? What use? It has crumbled, and I do not care! — I have denied you and thrust you away. But that is over. I tell you it is through with forever! — You are all that I have feared and shunned and missed on earth, and now I have you the rest is as nothing.

He takes her, feebly resisting, into his arms.

I know a place, out there, high in the great moun-

tains. Heaven-piercing walls of stone, a valley of trees and sweet water in the midst — grass and flowers, such flowers as you have never dreamed could grow. — There we will take our happiness. A year — a month — a day — what matter? We will make a life-time of each hour!

RHODA.

Yielding to his embrace, whispers.

Don't talk. Don't think. Only — love me. A little while. A little while.

The deep hush of their embrace is broken by a cry from within. The young mother opens the hall door, in a distraction of terror and grief.

MOTHER.

Come here! Come quick!

Michaelis and Rhoda draw apart. He stares at the woman, as if not remembering who she is.

MICHAELIS.

What is it?

MOTHER.

I can't rouse him. He's gone! My baby's gone. O, my God, he's dead!

She disappears. Rhoda follows, drawing Michaelis, dazed and half resisting, with her. Lazarus pushes the stair door softly open and follows the pair, then hesitates, turns, and with a gesture of despair goes out by the rear entrance, leaving the door unlocked behind him. The room remains vacant for a short time, the stage held by distant singing. It has begun to grow light outside. There is a knock at the outer door; Dr. Littlefield looks in.

LITTLEFIELD.

Speaks back, to some one outside.

Coast clear.

Littlefield and the Rev. Culpepper enter, followed by Uncle Abe. Beeler enters simultaneously from the kitchen.

Good-morning. Thought we'd be on hand early. Did n't know when the procession to Kingdom-come might get under way.

BEELER.

With silent salutation.

Did you find that door unlocked?

LITTLEFIELD.

Yes.

BEELER.

Queer thing!

He re-locks it.

LITTLEFIELD.

Your man has n't vamoosed, has he? Uncle Abe here says he saw the Indian boy slipping by in the fog.

Beeler turns to the negro inquiringly.

BEELER.

Alone?

UNCLE ABE.

Mumbles half to himself.

'Lone. 'Spec' he was alone. Did n't even have his own flesh and bones wif 'im!

BEELER.

What 's that?

UNCLE ABE.

Holds up his right hand, which he eyes with superstitious interest.

Put dis hyar han' right frough him! — Shore 's you 're bo'n. Right plum frough 'im whar he lives!

BEELER.

Excuse me, gentlemen.

Exit into hall. He is heard to knock on Rhoda's door, open and close it.

CULPEPPER.

Employing his strongest term of social disapprobation.

Mediæval! Absolutely mediæval!

LITTLEFIELD.

Not a bit of it. It's up to date, and a little more too.

CULPEPPER.

I'm astonished that you take this situation flippantly.

LITTLEFIELD.

Not for a minute. My bread and butter are at stake.

Wickedly.

Yours too, you know.

Beeler reappears, beckons to the two, putting his finger to his lips. They follow him out. Uncle Abe, who has not been included in Beeler's gesture, stares after them curiously. Mrs. Beeler enters, alone, from the hall. She is in a state of vague alarm.

MRS. BEELER.

To the negro.

What is it? What is the matter?

Uncle Abe shakes his head in silence.

I thought I heard—

She breaks off, as a murmur of voices rises outside. There is a sound of stumbling and crowding on the outer steps, and violent knocking. The outer door is forced open, and a crowd of excited people is about to pour into the room. All this has happened so swiftly that Beeler, reëntering hurriedly, is able to force the crowd back only after several have made an entrance.

BEELER.

Keep back! You can't come in here.

As he pushes them roughly back and defends the entrance, several excited voices speak together.

VOICES IN THE CROWD.

Where is he?— They say he's gone away. We seen his boy makin' for the woods. — O, it's not true! Make him come out.

BEELER.

Curse you, keep back, I say!

Simultaneously with Beeler, the doctor, minister, and Rhoda have entered from the hall, and Martha from the kitchen. The two women support Mrs. Beeler, who remains standing, the fear deepening in her face. The men have crossed to the door, to assist Beeler in case the attack is renewed.

A VOICE.

On the outskirts of the crowd.

Where 's he gone to?

BEELER.

He 's here. In the next room. Keep back! Here he comes now.

Michaelis appears in the hall door, which has remained open. There is a low murmur of excitement, expectation, and awe among the people crowded in the entrance. Beeler and the other men step to one side, leaving Michaelis to confront the crowd alone. Confused, half-whispered exclamations: "Hallelujah," "Emmanuel"; from a negro, "Praise de Lamb." Above the murmuring voices, a woman's voice rises: "He hath arisen, and His enemies are scattered."

MICHAELIS.

Who said that?

The woman, obscurely seen in the crowd, lifts her hands and cries again, this time in a voice ecstatic and piercing: "The Lord hath arisen, and His enemies are scattered!"

MICHAELIS.

His enemies are scattered! Yea, as a whirlwind. He scatters them, the evil and the faithless!

He advances into the room, with a gesture backward through the open door.

In yonder room a child lies dead on its mother's knees, and the mother's eyes follow me with curses.

At the news of the child's death, Mrs. Beeler has sunk with a low moan into a chair, where she lies white and motionless. Michaelis turns to her.

And here lies one who rose at my call, and was as one risen; but now —

He breaks off, raises his hand at her, and speaks in a voice of pleading.

Arise, my sister!

She makes a feeble gesture of the left hand.

Rise up once more, I beseech you!

She attempts to rise, but falls back helpless. He crosses the room, saying as if to himself, in a voice of tragic resignation, —

Broken! Broken!

At the stair door he turns, and again addresses the crowd.

Despair not, for another will come, and another and yet another, to show you the way. And for me, pity me and love me and help me in your feebleness, for I am become as one of you.

He goes out, and is heard ascending the uncarpeted stairs.

BEELER.

Bending over his wife.

Can't you get up, mother?

She shakes her head. One of the bystanders, at Beeler's signal, rolls the invalid-chair to her side, and they lift her inert form into it.

BEELER.

You might as well go home, my friends. It's over.

Beeler pushes the chair out. Rhoda has sunk down by the table, her face hidden. The room is emptied in silence of all but her and Dr. Littlefield. After

a philosophic gesture to the departing minister, Littlefield lights a cigarette and smokes with enjoyment.

LITTLEFIELD.

Well, how about that little lamp all trimmed and burning?

She does not move. He waits; then drops his flippant tone.

You've been agonizing over shadows, why not try a little comfortable sense? We'll go West and renew our youth.

He hesitates, then gathers himself together.

Confound it, Rho, if you're so set on it, I'll marry you! — Straight and square.

She makes a distracted gesture.

'Pon honor. Till death us do part!

RHODA.

Looking up.

Please go.

LITTLEFIELD.

Did you hear what I said?

RHODA.

Yes, I heard it.

LITTLEFIELD.

How about your bargain, then? Does n't that mean anything to you, either?

RHODA.

No.

LITTLEFIELD.

Goes to the outer door, which he opens.

Last call, old girl.

Pause. He throws away his cigarette stub, and indulges in a cynical shrug.

Women!

Exit.

Michaelis is heard descending. He enters, carrying his hat and a kind of cloth knapsack, such as is sometimes used by foot-travelers. Still holding his hat and bundle, he bends over her.

MICHAELIS.

Come! Come away with me, into the new life.

RHODA.

Looks at him for a long time in silence.

A life rooted in the failure of all that your life has meant to you from the beginning.

MICHAELIS.

Until to-day I did not know what my life was.

RHODA.

You do not know that — even yet. It is greater than you are. — And of my life you know less than nothing. You have not asked me a single question about — my life.

MICHAELIS.

There was no need.

RHODA.

There *was* need! There *was* need! Need for me to tell and for you to hear. — You swept me along and lifted me above myself in that first hour of our meeting. And all the hours of the next day you held me above myself, like a strong wind. I did n't know what you were. I did n't know why I was happy and exalted. I had been wretched so long, — such bitterness and anger of heart. But now, suddenly, in an instant, I was filled with new joy, new hope and courage, and thoughts of a life lived, by faith, to some far-off, lovely issue. O, it was so long since I had been happy, and I had never been as happy as that, or anything like it.

MICHAELIS.

I never spoke to you of these things.

RHODA.

Not much, in words. But you said some things, and the rest spoke from you, thundered and sang in the silence. — Then came the revelation of what you were, a blinding light. And while I stood dazed, trembling, I saw something descend upon you like a shadow, and I knew that it had been there from the first, and that I had feared it from the first. You loved me, and that love was dreadful to you. You thought it was so because I was a woman, and stole your spirit's strength away. But it was not that. It was because I was a *wicked* woman.

MICHAELIS.

Why do you call yourself a wicked woman?

RHODA.

Because I am so. — It is cruel, it is cruel! I was young then, wild-hearted, pitifully ignorant. But those things never fade from a girl's soul, never, never. Men don't know that, or they could not in common pity treat us as they do.

MICHAELIS.

Looks at her long and broodingly.

Poor child! Poor child!

RHODA.

I tried to go away. You would n't let me go. I thought I had suffered before, but until I knew — about us — I had never really suffered. It had been like a wrong done by and to another — a sister — a younger sister, whom I rose up in my dreams like a tigress to defend. But now — now I — suffered.

MICHAELIS.

You were in all this need, and I — I only added gall to your bitterness!

RHODA.

Sweetness too. The words are written here forever.

She touches her breast. He remains silent, brooding upon her. After a pause, she goes on.

A little while ago, standing here, I tried to tell you — tried to break with my own hands the sweet and terrible vine that grew and grew about us, and

tangled your feet from their path. I knew why I took your spirit's strength away, and I had nerved myself to tell you why. But you began to speak —those wild words, that made me dizzy and drunk with joy. — And then suddenly God shattered us, you through me, and me through you, and all those suffering and expecting ones through us both.

Pause.

MICHAELIS.

It was not — what you have told me — that took my strength away.

RHODA.

It was not — that?

MICHAELIS.

It is that that gives me my strength back again.

RHODA.

Wonderingly.

Gives you — your strength — back again? — How do you mean? — How can that be?

MICHAELIS.

When I saw you first, and all the hours since then — till now — you were to me — (*he hesitates, searching for his image*) you were the fairy creature,

flinging her web of sunlight in the forest to snare me; you were the spirit of earthly joy, lifting your bowl of bright wine on the mountains of the sunset. — And all the time you were just a weak, wounded girl, praying for strength to live, to heal your wounds, and — after many days — to find the peace that you had lost.

RHODA.

Low.

Yes. I was — only — that.

MICHAELIS.

And I, who have dared to touch the bodies of men to heal them, I did not see that you were in need of what the whole world needs — healing, healing!

He puts his hand on her head and gazes into her face.

I looked into your eyes once, and they were terrible as an army with banners. I look again now, and I see they are only a girl's eyes, very weak, very pitiful. — I told you of a place, high in the great mountains. I tell you now of another place, higher yet, in more mysterious mountains. Travel thither, for there is strength there. And I will go with you, step by step, from faith to faith and from

strength to strength, for I see depths of life open and heights of love come out, which I never dreamed of till now!

RHODA.

With dawning hope and joy.

You mean that — even now — ?

MICHAELIS.

In God's fair time. As the seed bursts, as the bud is opened.

RHODA.

You mean — it is not — too late?

MICHAELIS.

I mean that as you cry to me for help, the strength that I had lost pours back into my soul.

RHODA.

O, if I thought that could be!

MICHAELIS.

By the mystery that is man, and the mercy that is God, I say it is so!

A song rises outside.

RHODA.

Starting up.

They are waiting still!

He follows her to the window; they gaze out.

MICHAELIS.

Against my own words, they trust me still!

RHODA.

As you trust yourself still, and what you have been given to do.

MICHAELIS.

I thought my power was gone forever. It has risen again. Even now it rises again, higher and higher, a mighty flood, quenchless, deathless!

RHODA.

Joyfully.

I see it in your face! I feel it in your hand!—
You will go out to them now.

MICHAELIS.

Points to the room where the child lies.

And leave this behind me?

RHODA.

Remember — that hour before dawn, in the chapel on the mesa, when the other watchers were asleep.

MICHAELIS.

With low intensity.

I was thinking of that! I was thinking of that!

RHODA.

But now — the greater battle.

MICHAELIS.

Indicating Mrs. Beeler's room.

And this other, who rose with my strength and fell with my weakness —?

RHODA.

Until the greater victory!

He opens the outer door, and turns on the threshold. They look at each other in silence, which Rhoda is the first to break, her voice and countenance full of suppressed meaning.

RHODA.

On earth?

MICHAELIS.

I pray for it.

RHODA.

And — if not?

MICHAELIS.

It will be.

RHODA.

But — if not?

MICHAELIS.

Then — somewhere.

RHODA.

Somewhere.

MICHAELIS.

Somewhere — for me — your feet — shall be beautiful upon the mountains.

RHODA.

By faith.

MICHAELIS.

By faith, which makes all things possible, which brings all things to pass.

He goes out. She stands watching him a moment, then herself goes out. The hall door, which has been

left slightly ajar, is pushed open, and Mrs. Beeler appears, walking alone, with the same rapt, trance-like air as in Act II. Her husband follows.

BEELER.

His voice muffled by fear and awe.

Mary! For God's sake, what is it? What's happened to you?

MRS. BEELER.

Points to the open entrance door.

Seth has told me.

BEELER.

Told you what, mother? You were lying there like a stone, and suddenly —

Breaks off.

Told you what?

Mrs. Beeler, as if not hearing her husband, gazes at the light of the rising sun, which begins to flood the room.

MRS. BEELER.

The Sun of Righteousness hath risen, with healing in its wings!

A door opens in the hall: the young mother appears.

MOTHER.

Ecstatic, breathless.

Come here! O, do come!

BEELER.

What is it?

MOTHER.

My baby! — I don't dare say it, but I believe — O, I do believe — !

She draws Beeler out with her; he goes, glancing back at his wife, reluctant to leave her. Outside there rises a hymn, of martial and joyous rhythm. Mrs. Beeler advances to the table, takes one of the lilies from the vase, and as she lifts it repeats the young woman's words, but with an accent of quiet and serene affirmation.

MRS. BEELER.

I believe. I do believe!

Holding the lily, she passes out through the sun-flooded entrance-way into the open air.

CURTAIN

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